What, Where, Why?
Developing and Delivering Winning Webinars

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Connecting…

While, thankfully, the pandemic seems to be somewhat dulling in our consciousness, we do still need to use it as context for what we'll be discussing here. Unquestionably, it has been a seminal moment for many reasons, and the way in which IT buyers, among others, consume content is another one of those things that has changed significantly in its wake.

For B2B tech organisations, this has put additional pressures on producing the most creative, high quality, and engaging content possible. After all, how do you stand out when all of your competitors are vying for the attention of the same audience using similar approaches?

Well, while they aren't a new phenomenon, webinars are most certainly a great way to boost demand generation activities. And if they weren't a key part of your marketing toolkit in the past, they definitely should be now. For a time, in-person events

and conferences were a waning memory, and although they're making a comeback, webinars are still going to be crucial for thought leadership campaigns, showcasing products, and generally keeping your brand in the eye-line of your target audience.

But while it's relatively easy to host a webinar, hosting an *effective* webinar is rather more difficult. To understand more about the dos and don'ts, we surveyed 300 IT decision makers (ITDMs) to explore their likes, dislikes, and what leads them to register for webinar content they come across.

The right tool at the right time

One thing this research did for us was crystalise the importance of webinars as a marketing asset over the course of the pandemic, and subsequently made us realize how heavily they will feature in the content consumption of ITDMs moving forwards. This is emphasised by the fact that almost half (47%) put webinars among their top three most useful content types of the future, placing them above all other forms of content, including short reports, in-person conferences/events, and infographics, among others.

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Further to that, almost two thirds (65%) admit that their webinar consumption increased in the 12 months prior to June 2021 — this is up on the 56% who reported the same from January to August 2020. Not only that, but 59% anticipated an increase in their consumption over the 12 months following June.

June 2020 - June 2021 (65%)

January 2020 - August 2020 (56%)

This means that B2B tech marketers — at the very least — have a ready-made (and growing) audience. But how do you cut through the noise, get people engaged, and ultimately drive potential prospects down your marketing funnel, from awareness to action?

To assist you, over the next few pages, we've pulled together some helpful tips to aid this process and give you a head start when it comes to maximising the value that can be achieved from hosting webinars.

Make your webinars visible in the right places
Four in ten find out about webinars through email marketing or social media

Before anyone views your webinar, they must know it's available. Sounds obvious right? Maybe, but if your organisation isn't promoting its content in the right way, at the right time, then marketing campaigns can easily fall flat.

According to 42% of our ITDMs, they find out about webinar content of interest to them through email marketing from technology organisations that they're subscribed to. So, as a B2B tech company, it's critical that you cosy up to some of the most prominent technology publications if you hope to get your webinar content in front of your target audience.
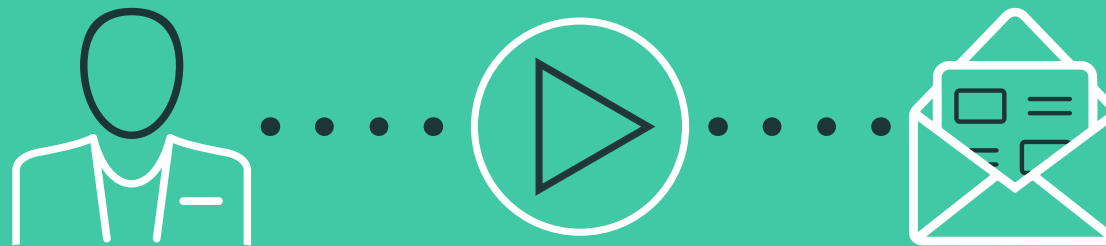
And as you'd expect, your social channels and website have a crucial role to play! 41% of respondents said they find out about webinar content on social media – like LinkedIn and Twitter – with the same proportion (41%) looking to IT vendor websites.

Clearly, ITDMs are hungry for webinar content that matters to them, so if you get your promotion right, then you're well on your way to driving engagement and hopefully conversion.

Your webinars must sound appealing

On average, there are three separate factors that would increase the chances of an ITDM registering for a webinar

Right, so you have the attention of your target audience — now you need them to register. Again, this isn't designed to be a lightbulb moment, but it's clear that a dry or lengthy description of what will be discussed probably won't have people chomping at the bit to sign up and tune in. In fact, 29% told us that an interesting/eye-catching title or description is a key part of their registration decision. The topic must be outlined in this description though, or you risk losing potential viewers.

More than half (53%) said that the topic being about a product or service that would be useful in their personal or professional life is a key factor in making them more likely to register for a webinar. And a similar proportion (51%) look for the topic to be directly relevant to their role/industry.

But that isn't the be-all and end-all — having speakers that are known topic or industry experts is important to four in ten (39%), while independent research results being involved are a registration sweet spot for over a third (35%).

What makes ITDMs more likely to sign up for a webinar?

53% Topic is around a product/service that would be useful in their personal/professional life

51% Topic is directly relevant to their role/industry

39% The speakers being a known topic/industry expert

35% Independent research results being involved

Not showing all answer options

Obviously, we'd have loved that last point to be 100%, but you can't have it all, and data fudging isn't the business we're in. Perhaps though, you could tease the audience with one of the most interesting stats from your research to whet their appetite and get them on the hook. Or promise them further content, which is a selling point for 30% of ITDMs.

There are so many webinars available to potential audience members, that they simply don't have time to watch all of them. And that's without even mentioning other similar content types, such as podcasts or virtual events – which you're also competing against – so you must find a way of standing out from the crowd if you hope to drive your registration numbers.

Ensure you utilise multiple speakers to maximise engagement
Only 6% believe that a single speaker is the ideal number for a webinar

So, you're racking up registration numbers — in theory that's the hard part done. But don't rest on your laurels - you must ensure that your speakers strike the right tone to keep your audience engaged.

First and foremost, having the right number of speakers is important — according to our respondents, on average, the ideal number is three. Thinking back to our previous findings, this means that one approach could be a representative from your company, a known topic or industry expert, and an expert in the research results that you've gathered (ahem...ahem).

But seriously, it's critical to maintain the interest of your audience and having multiple speakers for different perspectives is a great way to keep the discussion flowing, rather than just one person delivering a monologue. A third (33%) of those surveyed attest that they've disliked webinars sounding too much like a lecture in the past, so you must avoid this in future endeavours.

48% said that a conversational tone rather than something too formal would make a webinar more engaging for them

36% think that multiple speakers for different perspectives is a good way to enhance this engagement

The data paints a very clear picture here — the speakers that you choose for your webinars are crucial and could be the difference between a positive or negative exposure to your brand.

Avoid audience fatigue

Webinar length is key, and a variety of interactive features are cited by more than three in ten as ways of boosting engagement!

You've likely put a lot of work into getting this webinar off the ground, so don't let that effort go to waste now by allowing it to become boring. Getting your audience excited for what you're about to say and then presenting a snoozefest is a sure-fire way to create negative brand associations, which is the antithesis of what you had planned.

A big part of avoiding audience fatigue will come down to the length of your webinars. On average, those surveyed believe that the ideal length is 46 minutes. Try not to exceed this – your audience is likely to be suffering from the same time poorness issues as everyone else, so don't take up more of their time than you need. Keep it tight, keep it engaging.

If anything, shorter is better...
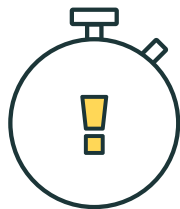
32% admitted that a webinar being too long is something they've disliked about ones they've watched in the past.
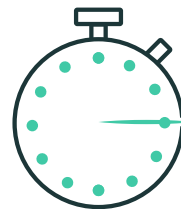
Only 16% say that their ideal length is in excess of an hour

Compared to 28% who would prefer something up to 30 minutes.

Aside from webinar length, incorporating interactive features into your content will keep your audience engaged — real time polls (37%), enhanced Q&A with up/down voting (36%), the ability to chat with other attendees (31%), and even gamification such as trivia on the topic (24%) are all approaches that can make webinars more engaging according to surveyed ITDMs.

37%

36%

31%

24%

Real time polls

Enhanced Q&A with up/down voting

The ability to chat with other attendees

Gamification such as trivia on the topic

While this might be an overarching objective of your webinar, cramming your slides full of product information or why your company is the best thing since sliced bread, is likely to be a turn off for many. Of course, you must layer your expertise through the webinar, but unless you have marketed it as being product-driven, then you need to steer clear of forcing this information upon your audience where possible. Further dislikes reported by ITDMs include: poor time management that leads to rushing the content (28%), too much information (27%), poor visuals (25%), and no useful takeaways (23%).

All of this must be taken into consideration while creating the narrative and content for your webinar — if you allow audience fatigue to creep in or lose their attention even for a moment, then this could easily lead to a negative experience that reflects poorly on your brand.

There are also some critical missteps that you must avoid if you hope to keep your audience interested.

The most common (35%) webinar dislike among respondents is there being too much of a sales/ marketing focus.

Ensure your webinar is accessible to the masses
Most have watched an entire webinar recording on-demand in the last two years

81%
of those surveyed admit that over the last couple of years they have started watching a webinar live and dropped off part way through

Getting your brand in front of the widest audience possible could make all the difference in your end of year sales and marketing review. This means allowing your prospective audience to view your webinar content at a time that suits them. We've discussed time poorness already, but you don't want to miss out on viewers just because they aren't available at 11am on a Thursday morning.

So, making your content accessible on-demand is important, with 42% of respondents citing that this being an option rather than having to watch live is a factor that would make them more likely to register for a webinar.

Emphasising the importance of on-demand content, is the fact that 81% of those surveyed admit that in the 12 months prior to June 2021, they had started watching a webinar live and dropped off part way through, while 33% had done this on more than five occasions. Similarly, 83% had watched at least one webinar that wasn't live, with 42% watching over five at a time more suited to them.

Clearly, using a platform with recording functionality will be crucial to any successful webinar efforts — remember you need an audience to help drive your marketing funnel, so don't exclude those who aren't available at the time you conduct the live event.

To wrap up

All in all, it's evident that as a B2B tech marketer, you simply must include webinars at the core of your content activities over the coming years. If you are still in any doubt, then remember webinars are most commonly (47%) reported among the top three types of work-related content that respondents believe they will find most valuable in the future. 18% even believe they will be the single most useful form of content, which should be enough to remove any of those lingering reservations.

But, despite ITDMs being hungry for webinar content, this doesn't mean that they will settle for anything you stick in front of them. Your webinars must be easy to find, sound enticing, be as engaging as you can possibly make them, and be accessible any time, any place.

And while none of these tips should be eureka moments, they are based on hard evidence provided by a sample of ITDMs. At the very least, hopefully they serve as a useful reminder that if you fail to check all of these boxes, you could see low audience numbers, high drop off rates, and worst of all, negative brand associations — none of which are conducive to driving customers through that marketing funnel.

Use research insights to illuminate your next webinar.

Click here to talk to us about how we can help.